Judit Kormos (Department of English Applied Linguistics, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)
kormos.j@chello.hu

Kata Csizér (Department of English Applied Linguistics, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)
weinkata@yahoo.com

Address for both authors: 1146 Ajtósi Dürer sor 19-21 Budapest Hungary

Corresponding author: Judit Kormos

THE EFFECTS OF INTERCULTURAL CONTACT ON LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION: RESULTS OF AN INTERVIEW STUDY

THE EFFECTS OF INTERCULTURAL CONTACT ON LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION: RESULTS OF AN INTERVIEW STUDY

Abstract

The research reported in this paper investigates what types of inter-ethnic contact Hungarian schoolchildren have, what kind of language-related attitudes they can give account of and how they see the role of contact situations in affecting their attitudinal and motivational dispositions towards the L2, the L2 speaking communities and the process of L2 learning. This study is based on data gathered in an interview project that involved 40 13/14-year-old learners of English and German from all over Hungary. The results reveal that tourism does not create many contact opportunities for the majority of students in this country and that in this particular foreign language setting indirect contact through various cultural products is the most frequent means of gaining information about target language speakers and their culture. The participants were found to display a wide variety of attitudes towards a considerable number of aspects of the target language culture. Students reported that cross-cultural contact helps the development of their communicative competence and contributes to the increase of their motivation and the decrease of language use anxiety.

Key words: inter-ethnic contact, motivation, attitudes, foreign language learning, communicative competence.

Introduction

Despite the fact that the relationship between language attitudes and language learning motivation has been researched thoroughly in the past decade (for a recent summary see Dörnyei, 2005), considerably less attention has been paid to one of the possibly most important antecedents of language attitudes and its impact on language learning motivation, namely, inter-cultural contact. Inter-cultural contact is an important issue in second language acquisition for several reasons. First of all, one of the main aims of learning second and foreign languages is to be able to communicate with members of other cultures who do not speak one's mother tongue. In addition, interaction with speakers of other languages creates opportunities for developing L2 learners' language competence (see e.g. Swain's (1985) output hypothesis). The learners' experience of these encounters can influence both their disposition to the target language and their attitude to L2 speakers and the L2 culture. Inter-cultural contact can also be assumed to affect L2 learners' motivated behavior, that is, the energy and effort they are willing to put into the L2. Therefore, as Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) pointed out, "intercultural contact is both a means and an end in L2 studies" (p.2).

Most studies even in the field of social psychology (for a review see Pettigrew, 1998) use questionnaires to investigate the role of inter-cultural contact in shaping attitudes and influencing behavior. In these questionnaires, contact is primarily operationalized as the frequency of meeting members of different social or ethnic groups, and attitude scales generally contain stereotypical statements about the outgroup. In many language learning situations such as Hungary, however, students live in a mainly monolingual society, where inter-ethnic contact in which a language other than Hungarian is used is not very frequent and typically involves meeting foreign visitors to the country. These encounters, however, are brief and superficial (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005; Stephan, 1987), and differ from situations where different ethnic and social groups have daily and close contact with each other. Therefore standard questionnaires used in social psychology that were developed in multi-cultural and multi-linguistic environments are not applicable to these situations. Neither can we use attitude scales devised in previous studies, since it is impossible to foretell what attitudes L2 learners might show in these limited personal contact situations. An additional problem is that in the case of English, which is often used as a lingua franca in many countries of the world, it is impossible to identify the specific ethnic and cultural groups that represent native speakers of the language (Widdowson, 1994, 1997). As a result, in order to investigate the role of inter-cultural contact in foreign language learning environments, we first need to explore what kind of contact students of foreign languages have, with whom and how frequently, what attitudes they display and how they see the role of contact in language learning. Thus, the aim of our paper is to explore what types of inter-cultural contact Hungarian schoolchildren have, what kind of language-related attitudes they can give account of and how they see the role of contact situations in affecting their attitudinal and motivational dispositions towards the L2, the L2 speaking communities and the process of L2 learning. Our research is an exploratory study, which involved the analysis of interviews conducted with 40 Hungarian school-children learning either English or German. In this paper, we first provide a theoretical background to our study, which is followed by the description of the research procedures. Next, we discuss what types of contact situations our participants experienced, what kind of attitudes they displayed and how these situations

affected their attitudes to the L2 as well as to L2 speakers and culture and what influence the inter-cultural encounters had on their motivated behavior.

Review of literature

Our research is based on the Contact Hypothesis, the roots of which go back to the post-World War II United States, where interracial relations became of central interest, and research was subsidized to find ways to reduce interracial prejudice. The seminal work of Allport (1954) created a theoretical background to this work by reasoning that favorable circumstances, defined by Allport as *equal status*, *common goals*, *co-operation* and *institutional support*, were necessary for intergroup contact to lead to favorable changes within the attitudinal dispositions of the individuals. Allport's work resulted in a wide variety of research projects ranging from naturalistic field work through highly controlled laboratory studies to representative surveys employing nationwide samples, which all aimed to reveal how circumstances affected the outcome of inter-group contact (see, Amir, 1969; Cook, 1978, 1985; Desforges, Lord, Pugh, Sia, Scarberry, & Ratcliff, 1997; Desforges, Lord, Ramsey, Mason, Van Leenwen, West, 1991; Hamberger & Hewstone, 1997; Hewstone, 1985; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe, & Hewstone, 1996). The majority of these studies were successful in terms of proving that favorable circumstances as outlined by Allport might indeed have positive effects on interethnic attitudes. In his comprehensive review of the literature of inter-ethnic contact, Pettigrew (1998) argued that from the many conditions believed to be necessary for optimal contact in earlier research, only five were essential: equal group status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, authority support, and friendship potential.

Another field of social-psychology that is relevant to our investigation is the study of inter-cultural attitudes and beliefs. The investigation of different types of attitudes is one of the most popular fields of research within social psychology because attitudes are supposed to shape how people behave (Allport, 1954), although it is a heated debate when and how exactly the cognitive and affective components of attitudes lead to actional responses (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Hewstone, Stroebe, Codol & Stephenson, 1988). Attitudes are usually assumed to be made up of cognitive, affective and behavioral components (e.g., Rosenberg and Hovland's (1960) tripartial attitude model). Scott also (1966) proposed that the affective, cognitive and actional components of national attitudes interact in a complex and dynamic manner. The affective component comprises one's emotial reactions and feelings towards a country or a group of people, whereas the cognitive component contains attributes of the given country or ethnic group such as size, military power and wealth. The action component involves the way people respond to a nation or minority group; for example, whether they think that more social help should be provided for a given group of people or whether their country should start a war against another one. Scott (1966) cited a number of studies which indicate that people tend to have consistent attitudes, that is, they "tend to attribute favorable characteristics to nations (or groups or individuals) they like and unfavorable characteristics to those they dislike" (p. 82). He also argued that the more information one has about a nation or group of people, the more complex his/her attitudinal disposition will become.

As for the field of second language acquisition, contact first appeared in Clément's (1980) model as a key constituent of motivation. The hypothetical model was tested by Clément and Kruidenier (1983), whose results proved that frequent and pleasant contact experience led to an increased linguistic self-confidence in L2 learners,

which, in turn, affected motivation in a positive way. High scores on the latent dimension of integrativeness, on the other hand, affected the frequency and quality of contact in a positive way. An additional aspect of the relationship between contact and self-confidence was added by Labrie and Clément (1986), who investigated a bicultural milieu and found that negatively seen contact if frequent enough had positive impact on self-confidence, probably due to the fact that "experience in aversive contacts develops the individual's expectations regarding the capacity to face successfully second language usage in such situations" (p. 279). The relationship between contact and self-confidence proved to be important in the monolingual Hungarian context as well. Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) concluded that all aspects of inter-ethnic contact correlated negatively with English use anxiety, English class anxiety, and positively with self-evaluation of proficiency and self-confidence. Noels, Pon, and Clément (1996) examined the relationship between contact and self-confidence in terms of identity and psychological adjustment. Their results showed that students' interethnic contact with Canadians was positively related to their self-confidence in English. In a similar vein, Clément et al. (2001) concluded that more frequent positive contact not only led to more confident language use but also affected the identification profiles of language learners.

In certain learning environments, however, direct contact with L2 speakers is minimal, yet the L2 community may still be well-known to the learners through indirect contact with it, that is, through the learners' exposure to a range of L2 cultural products and artefacts, such as films, videos, books, magazines and music. In their investigation of various L2 learning orientations, Clément and Kruidenier (1983) isolated a factor that tapped the 'social-cultural' dimension of L2 motivation, which covered "an interest in the way of life and the artistic production of the target language group" (p. 285). The presence of this socio-cultural dimension characterized groups living in a multicultural milieu, whereas for the groups in monolingual setting the factor included other meanings such as general knowledge about the world and self. Clément et al. (1994) investigated different motivational orientations in a largely monolingual Hungarian context, and they isolated a component called English media subsuming the consumption of cultural products in English (British/American/Irish etc.). This factor received strong endorsement from Grade 11 students (17 year old) participating in the study, which highlighted the salient role that L2 cultural products play in familiarizing learners with the L2 community and thus shaping their attitudes. In a longitudinal Hungarian study Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh (2006) found indirect contact to be one of the main variables in their model describing motivated learning behavior, in which the relationship between self-confidence and attitudes toward L2 speakers/community were mediated through cultural interest. They found that the main source of contact with the language is an indirect one, through the exposure to various L2-specific cultural products. Dörnyei and his colleagues argued that the extent of the learners' confidence in dealing with the L2 will determine the willingness of the learner to seek meaningful engagement with these cultural products, which in turn leads to an enhanced interest in these (see also Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005).

As can be seen in this review of literature, the effect of contact with L2 speakers has been investigated solely by quantitative studies, which provide a global overview of how encounters with foreigners in general affect language related attitudes, self-confidence, anxiety and motivated behavior. Therefore, we have little knowledge of what kind of contact learners in a foreign language setting experience, and how the students involved in these encounters see the role of contact in their language learning process. In addition, we also need to redefine inter-cultural contact from the perspective of language learners in a foreign language setting. For situations where language

learning for the majority of students in public education means the acquisition of highly prestigious languages spoken in the world and in their geographical region, inter-cultural contact means both personal direct and indirect contact with native and non-native speakers of the target language as well as contact with cultural products (mainly different types of electronic and printed media) in the target language. Most studies in social psychology primarily concentrate on direct personal contact which involves verbal communication between two social and/or ethnic groups. In foreign language settings, however, for many of the learners it is often typical to encounter visitors from abroad without direct personal contact. In these learning situations it is also frequently the case that students gain information about target language speakers only by watching films, reading magazines and books, browsing the Internet; in other words through contact with cultural products and artifacts.

The research we describe in this article is explorative in nature, therefore the aim of this paper is not to present findings that are generalizable only to a limited extent, but to discuss how inter-ethnic contact is perceived by Hungarian adolescents, what kind of attitudes these learners display and how they see the effect of contact situations on their L2 learning motivation.

Method

In April 2005 we conducted 40 structured interviews with 21 Hungarian students of English and 19 students of German at various localities of Hungary. The interview study reported in this article constitutes the first phase of our investigations concerning the role of inter-ethnic contact in L2 motivation.

Participants

Participants of the study were 40 Hungarian students (19 male/21 female) aged 13/14, who attended the final, eighth, grade of the primary[1] school system. In selecting the participants we tried to sample students evenly from each main region and type of settlement in Hungary, while also including a balanced mixture of touristically frequented and unfrequented places. 21 students studied English as a foreign language, and 19 learned German. Two participants studied both English and German. Table 1 includes an overview of the distribution of participants. In addition to Budapest, two major provincial cities were chosen, one of which was situated close to the border with Croatia. Three small towns in Western Hungary were selected to represent touristically popular settlements, two of which have famous spas regularly frequented by foreign visitors. One small town respectively in Eastern and Western Hungary was intended to represent border towns: one close to the Austrian and the other to the Serbian border. The rest of the settlements were towns and villages where, based on official Hungarian tourism information (Central Statistical Office, 2005), inhabitants were unlikely to meet foreign tourists.

The students within the particular schools were selected by the principal and the language teacher(s) based on our request that we would like to interview students who are motivated in learning the foreign language and who are successful language learners. The reason for choosing primary school students as participants for our research project is that they constitute the largest group of language learners in Hungary, for whom studying a foreign language is compulsory. Our experience in conducting the pilot interviews also suggested that students who are successful and motivated provided detailed discussions of their experiences and were willing to talk at

length in the interview, while students not interested in language learning did not talk in sufficient detail. Due to the fact that our aim was to get an overview of students' contact situations and the nature of their attitudes, it was important to obtain rich descriptions from the participants.

---
insert Table 1 around here

The interview

The interview questions were based on Dörnyei's (2001) process model of motivation and aimed to cover most components of the motivational construct outlined in this model. Some questions were also formulated based on the results of a previous questionnaire study by Dörnyei and Csizér (2005). The interview questions were piloted with three students from the target population. The final 40 interviews were conducted in Hungarian by paid and trained professional interviewers in the selected 20 schools with two students in each institution. The interviews took place individually in a quiet room of the school and lasted for approximately 40 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed by the paid interviewers. The transcripts were checked by the researchers. The interview consisted of four main parts. First we asked for students' main biographical data, then we collected general information on language learning (e.g., the best and worst experience concerning L2 learning). In the second part of the interview, students talked about their attitudes towards L2 languages and L2 communities (USA, Great Britain, Germany, Austria etc). This was followed by questions concerning the quality and quantity of intercultural contact the students had.

Analysis

Data were analyzed in several steps following the principles of the constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The reliability of categorization was secured by having the two researchers analyze the data independently and then by checking consistency. In case of disagreement, categories were refined and common standards were established.

Results and discussion

Types of inter-cultural contact situations

The interviews revealed that in accordance with our definition above, in a foreign language environment we need to differentiate two major types of inter-personal contact: direct contact that involves verbal interaction (either spoken or written) with native and non-native speakers of the target language and indirect contact, in the course of which students only see the target language speakers and do not talk to them or are told about the people and culture of the L2 by an "influential other" (e.g. parents, teacher, siblings) (see earlier discussion in the literature review). Indirect contact also involved encounters with L2 cultural artifacts through various media (TV, Internet,

books, movies, magazines and newspapers) (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983). Table 2 contains an overview of the different types of contact situations and the distribution of participants who experienced these situations.

---
insert Table 2 around here

As regards direct contact, the interaction with L2 speakers can take place in the target language country, in any other country abroad where the inhabitants also speak the target language as L2, and in the students' native country. In our sample 15 students (37.5%) had the opportunity to visit the target language countries (Great Britain, Canada, Germany and Austria) either with their parents or in the form of a school visit. The length of these visits was usually one week, but some students spent one month in the target language environment. Approximately an equal proportion of students of English (n=8) and learners of German (n=7) visited the target language countries. 9 students (22.5%) used the L2 in other European countries and interacted with non-native speakers of English (n=7) or German (n=2) during these visits. One student lived in a Scandinavian country and attended an international school where the language of instruction was English.

The majority of the direct contact situations, however, took place in the students' native language environment. 50% of students met and talked to native speakers of the L2 in Hungary, and 25% of the participants were involved in interactions in which the conversational partner was also a non-native speaker of the L2. The same number of students (n=10) used English and German (n=10) in conversations with native speakers. Learners of English (n=6), however, had more opportunities to talk to non-native speakers of the target language than students of German (n=4).

Several typical inter-personal contact situations in Hungary could be found in our interview data, the most frequent of which was meeting foreigners, both adults and children, in the participants' schools. This experience was described by one of our interviewees in the following way. "Last time students from Denmark came as exchange students, and pupils from our school also went to Denmark. Now those students whom they visited in Denmark came to our school" (S26)[2]. Students also interacted with foreigners in touristically frequented areas of Hungary; most typically at the holiday resorts of Lake Balaton. Some areas of Western and Southern Hungary are popular among Germans and the Dutch who buy holiday houses or settle down permanently in the small villages of these regions. Some of our participants have regular contact with these people. Two of the participants were in the fortunate situation that one of the members of their close family is a native speaker of German, therefore, they have regular contact with someone whose mother tongue is the language they study at school.

Direct contact in a written form involved chatting with native and non-native speakers on the Internet, communicating in traditional letters and email. Another type direct contact situation was when students saw foreigners from a distance but did not talk to them. 15 participants met tourists in Hungary in this way, and seven interviewees reported that they visited either the target language country or another European country, but they never talked to the people who live there. Students also get information from their language teachers about the target language country, its culture and people. Five students reported that their language teacher tells them about her

experiences with the culture of the L2. One of the participants described this as follows, "we also learn about the English way of life. This is interesting because the teacher has already been to England, and I would really like to see it myself." (S15). Another type of indirect contact can take place with the mediation of family members (n=7). "When my mother was in England, she made a video recording, and we watched these recordings. I saw people talking in English on this video and I really liked it. (S15)", recounted one of our interviewees.

As our interview data indicate, the most frequent type of contact with the target language culture is through the printed and electronic media. Every student regardless of the language they studied mentioned at least one type of cultural product that they have access to in the target language. Nevertheless, learners of English seem to have more frequent contact with the Internet, books, films and magazines in English than students who study German. This is understandable since most of the web-pages on the Internet are in English, and films are available in Hungary with English sub-titles, and rarely with German ones. The availability of simplified readers in English probably accounts for the relatively large number of students who read books in English (n = 11) as opposed to those who do it in German (n = 4). It was surprising to find that only a few students read magazines in German (n = 5) despite the fact that at many large news stands magazines both in English and German can be purchased. One possible explanation might be that students do not buy these magazines since they are rather expensive in Hungary, but have access to them in school libraries. It might be the case that school libraries are better equipped with English language books and magazines than German ones because typically more students learn English than German in most of the schools (Halász & Lannert, 2003).

As the results in Table 2 also show, all the students we interviewed had some kind of contact with the target language speakers and their culture. The most typical personal contact situation for our interviewees is direct spoken contact, and within this, conversation with a native speaker in Hungary. Considerably fewer students had the chance to establish rapport with native speakers of the target language abroad. Indirect contact is also frequent among our participants. Learners of English seemed to have more opportunities for engaging in conversation with non-native speaking visitors than learners of German because students met more visitors who speak English as L2 than German as L2. This is no surprise, as official Hungarian tourism data also shows that the number of English speaking visitors to Hungary has increased, whereas that of German speaking ones is on the decrease (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005). Contact situations in which the foreign language is used as a mediating language between the student and a foreigner who is also a non-native speaker were also frequent among our participants. This shows that not only English, but also German can serve as a lingua franca for younger learners in Hungary. Personal contact through the written media was found to be rare and mostly computer mediated, whereas every participant had contact with at least one type of cultural product in the target language.

The analysis of the types of contact situations reveal that there are two major factors that play a role in creating contact opportunities for interviewed children: the family and the school they attend. Parents play an important role in organizing and funding family trips abroad, but the results also suggest that a high number of schools also find it important to invite foreign visitors and organize exchange programs for their students. As an illustration, the two students who had the most intensive contact with target language speakers were from a remote and economically disadvantaged region of Hungary, where the school took part both in an exchange program with students from Germany and Denmark as well as in a special program in the course of which

Americans from various professions spent several months in the city. In the framework of this program students had extensive contact with American speakers of English. The relatively frequent and long encounters with these visitors seemed to have offered a friendship potential for the students, and in turn fostered positive attitudes towards speakers of the target language. The student from this town talked about this rewarding experience in the following way.

> We had people from America who were called global one ties. They were visitors and taught us in our English classes. We had conversation classes with them. They helped us with pronunciation. We took them for sightseeing tours. We became really good friends with them. We met in the streets and stopped to talk with them… (S25)

As the results suggest, the interviewed students do not meet tourists very frequently, despite living in touristically frequented areas such as the capitol of Hungary, Budapest. This might be due to the young age of the participants, and perhaps to the fact that with the exception of one student, the family of the students was not involved in the tourism industry. One of the participants, who lives in an area which is frequently visited by tourists and where a high number of foreigners have permanent residence, explained his lack of contact in the following way, "there are many Germans in this city, but I do not meet them very frequently, as I am busy with other things." (S35). The participant, whose mother rents rooms to tourists in a famous spa resort in Western Hungary, however, uses his knowledge of English to communicate with their German guests regularly ("We have German guests, and most of them speak English. We communicate with each other in English, and I enjoy it because I can make myself understood" (S21)). The case of this student also shows the importance of English as lingua franca in Hungary.

The types of attitudes do students display

The interviews and the subsequent analyses revealed four main areas within the subject domain of attitudes: (1) attitudes associated with the languages students were learning; (2) attitudes about the lifestyles of the different speech communities; (3) attitudes related to the wealth and vitality of the English- and German-speaking countries; and (4) attitudes linked to the personal and national characteristics of the L2 communities. Attitudes towards the languages were mostly affective in nature, while the other groups of attitudes displayed cognitive elements. Table 3 summarizes our attitude-related results broken down according to whether these attitudes were positive or negative.

---

insert Table 3 around here

As for the affective aspects of the attitudes towards the target languages, we found that more students (16 students) expressed positive attitudes than negative ones (6 students) for both English and German, which might be explained by the fact that motivated students were asked to participate in the survey. The negative opinions with regard to the languages were usually linked to various kinds of grammatical/language elements that were perceived as difficult for some students. Some learners also

mentioned that they disliked the fact that words have several meanings in English. Students' overall preferences for English or German were demonstrated by the fact that except for one student, all negative attitudes were accompanied by positive ones.

We labeled the second group of attitudes, which were mostly cognitive in nature, as attitudes related to the lifestyle of various L2 communities. Within this large analytical category, we could differentiate several subcategories, which are as follows:

- Housing ("Well, I would like to go to the mountains in Germany. The houses look so nice there, and the environment is so peaceful and quiet."(S30).
- Health/Eating, drinking: "Americans live an unhealthy life; they live for the present."(S36).
- Clothing: "Germans are elegant." (S34).
- Safety: "England is safer than the USA. In the USA there are more murders, and there is terror like the WTC." (S29).
- Recycling/cleanliness: "I envy them because they are so conscious about garbage collection. It is as if littering was a great sin. Vienna was extremely clean." (S12).

It was interesting to observe that in terms of life-style, 14 year-old students frequently expressed positive attitudes to housing mostly in connection with Germany and Austria. Also concerning Austria and Germany, interviewees frequently remarked that towns and cities are clean, and that citizens attribute special importance to recycling and selective garbage collection. Some participants (especially female ones) praised the elegant way of dressing in Germany and England. Attitudes related to eating, drinking and healthy life-style were mainly mentioned in connection with Great Britain and the USA. As regards Great Britain, two students talked about tea ("I like their culture and customs, especially the afternoon tea" (S2). Students often noted that Americans have unhealthy eating habits and as a result, they are overweight. Despite the facts that Hungary is geographically very distant from the USA and that participants are in their early teens, a number of students expressed their concern about terror and safety in the USA even four years after the attack on WTC. The interviews were conducted before the bombings in the London metro, hence the students' comparison with Great Britain as being safer (see the quote above).

Views communicated about the wealth and vitality of the different speech communities had important explanatory power in a previous motivation-related study (Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006). However, very few students had overt attitudes towards the wealth of the different speech communities, as only five students mentioned the high standard of living of the Germans and three that of Americans. One of the participants referred to the "from rags to riches" myth saying that "If somebody goes there [to the USA], he/she will become famous or rich easily. That's why I think so many people would like to live there. You can achieve things much more easily in the USA than here in Hungary" (S26). Another interviewee commented on the technological inventions made in the USA in the following way, "they contributed a lot to the development of mankind with their inventions (S25)."

Another group of attitudes revealed students' thoughts concerning some personal and/or national characteristics of the different speech communities. Adjectives that students used to describe the British included nice, interesting, sophisticated, friendly, polite, serious, elegant, calm, and helpful. Negative comments centered around adjectives like proud, domineering, reserved, aristocratic, and conservative. One student remarked that "on the surface they seem to be very polite, but you never know what they really think" (S19). Another interviewee commented on the British not being open.

"They don't want to introduce the Euro. They stick to their traditions and don't want to allow other people to become a member of their culture" (S28). Many of these national stereotypes are in accord with a survey conducted with secondary school students in 1991. In his research Hunyady (1996) found that Hungarian teenagers had the most positive attitudes among European, Asian and American nations to the British. Like our interviewees, participants in Hunyady's survey praised the British for being intelligent, and the negative characteristics centered around being reserved.

As for the Americans, a number of students remarked that they are "freer than anybody else in the world" (S28), and "within limits they do whatever they want to do" (S33). Positive characteristics included the Americans being curious, helpful and free. Most of the criticism concerned their unhealthy eating habits and its consequence of being overweight. The participants also mentioned that "Americans are always on the run" (S4) and that "life is accelerated in the USA" (S18). In 1991, in Hunyady's (1996) survey, Hungarian secondary school students expressed more positive attitudes towards the Americans than our participants. In the past 15 years, however, negative attitudes to Americans were also observed in an earlier interview study by Kormos and Lukóczky (2004), who found that a considerable number of demotivated learners expressed a dislike for Americans. These learners blamed the Americans for the negative effects of globalization and for playing an overwhelmingly dominant role in world politics.

In connection with the Germans and also the Austrians, although to a lesser extent, students mentioned that they were nice, friendly, understanding, tolerant and hospitable. Germans were also characterized as precise and punctual and as people who always observe the rules. The Germans were mostly criticized for being cold, proud and loud. Two students stated that they did not like Germans because of the role Germany played in World War II. Hunyady (1996) also found that Germans were very popular among secondary school students in 1991. Similarly to our interviewees, the participants of his survey also regarded Germans as diligent and sociable.

As regards similarities and differences between Hungary and the target language speakers, students were divided as to whether they saw the two nations as similar or as different. As a tendency, we could observe that participants who had direct contact with target language speakers in their home countries, mentioned that target language speakers are similar to Hungarians. Two students explicitly remarked that "children are similar everywhere in the world" (S4 and S26). Those who had limited contact experience frequently characterized English and German speakers as strange or very different from Hungarians. Another student stated that "Every country is different. There are different countries in the world because everybody is unique" (S1).

The analysis of language related attitudes reveals that students display a variety of attitudes towards a considerable number of aspects of the target language culture. They commented on housing, lifestyle, clothing, as well as health and environmental issues, and students were also able to characterize the nations to some extent. Although their attitudes are mostly schematic and superficial, the great variety of aspects they mention is worth noting. Not only is this range of attitudes relevant for future researchers and questionnaire designers, but also for teachers, who might exploit students' interest in these fields when teaching about the target language countries and cultures.

The perceived effect of contact

The analysis of the text of the interviews reveals that contact situations affect students in a variety of ways. One of the major influences is that L2 learners find

contact situations important in developing their L2 competence. Participants perceive that by engaging in conversations with foreigners, they can learn about how native speakers use the language in real life, out-of-classroom situations. As one of the participants expressed, "It is a different situation to talk to a foreigner whose mother tongue we are learning than to learn in school" (S3). In terms of the development of L2 competence, interviewees mentioned that contact situations "help to learn more about native speakers' style of speaking and their vocabulary" (S3), and to get used to NSs' speed of talking and pronunciation.

Encounters with NS were not only seen as opportunities to develop linguistic competence but also as means to learn about the target language culture (socio-linguistic competence – Canale & Swain, 1980). "Then we talk about our customs and they tell us about their customs. We talk about our nation, and they tell us about their people (S1)," explains one of our participants.

Students' reports show that opportunities to meet target language speakers also affected their motivated behavior. When asked about participants' best language learning experience in the lead-in phase of the interview, 4 of the 40 participants mentioned that it was an encounter in which they could use the language outside the classroom. One of the students, who lived in a remote area of Hungary but whose school organized a number of visits, described this experience in the following way:

> My best experience in learning English? We had American visitors, and we took them out for sightseeing. We talked in English to them about the sights and about where we are. They were really cool. (S25)

Among the components of motivated behavior, effort and persistence were mentioned as being affected by inter-cultural contact. In terms of invested effort, situations when the conversation between the target language speakers and the learner went smoothly, contributed to increasing the time and energy the student was willing to put into L2 learning. "If I meet more English people, I will learn English more willingly because this is a world language, and I can make myself understood with everyone" (S28), said one of the students. Experiencing difficulties in communicating also prompted some students to invest more effort into learning. As another interviewee explained, "last summer or the summer before that we were abroad, I was not very good at talking to foreigners. Then, I decided to invest more energy into learning English" (S23). The mere chance of meeting someone with whom one can practice the L2 also has an affect on invested effort if the student prepares for the encounter in advance. A participating student told us that "meeting foreigners is useful because then we can prepare for the conversation. We look up one or two words and can start putting together sentences about what we want to ask them" (S25).

Another component of motivation that was influenced by contact with NS and NNS is foreign language anxiety. Students mentioned that contact opportunities reduce their anxiety when having to speak with target language speakers. One of the participants, who attended a school near the Serbian border and whose teachers regularly organized trips to Serbia and invited Serbian children, explained that "well, since I attend this school in X and meet foreign students and talk to them, I feel less anxious because I have to talk more often" (S4). This finding is in line with results of Clément et al's (1994) study that showed that inter-ethnic contact reduced L2 anxiety.

Last but not least, participants mentioned that if they experience contact with foreigners, their attitude towards them becomes more positive. Some other participants said that "I have always had a positive opinion about the English. I never thought about

them in negative terms, and meeting them has just convinced me that they are nice people." (S26). This quote shows that contact experiences might not necessarily bring about a change in attitudes, but they provide further support for students' existing positive views. None of the participants reported that any of the encounters they had with target language speakers changed their attitudes in a negative direction, neither did students inform us that their negative attitudes were reinforced. This might be due to the fact that none of the students engaged in contact situations for long enough to collect negative experiences, thus none of them experienced a "culture shock" (Pool, 1966; Stangor et al., 1996).

In sum, students' perceptions of the importance of inter-ethnic contact reveal that they think encounters with foreigners help them develop their linguistic and socio-cultural competence. Participants also noted that both successful and unsuccessful communication experiences increased the effort they put into learning the target language. In line with findings of earlier research (Clément et al., 1994), our interviewees reported that they felt less anxious when having to use the L2 as a result of contact experiences. Encounters with foreigners were also found to help sustain initially positive attitudes towards target language speakers and change students' attitudes in a positive direction. Being familiar with learners' perceptions of the role of inter-cultural contact is very important since there is evidence that contact itself does not directly change attitudes but through the mediation of the perceived importance of the contact experience (van Dick et al, 2004).

Conclusion

In our interview project that involved 40 13/14-year-old learners of English and German from all over Hungary, we investigated what kind of contact situations students experience, what kinds of language-related attitudes they display and how they see the role of inter-cultural contact in language learning motivation. In this study we defined contact as both personal direct and indirect contact with native and non-native speakers of the target language as well as contact with cultural products (mainly different types of electronic and printed media) in the target language. The analysis of the various types of contact situations revealed that tourism does not create many contact opportunities for the majority of students in this country; it is rather family resources and relations as well as school visits that play an important role in helping students experience personal inter-cultural contact. Our results also indicate that in this particular foreign language setting indirect contact through various cultural products is the most frequent means of gaining information about target language speakers and their culture. These findings show the high importance of schools and language teachers in establishing exchange programs for their students as in a foreign language environment school-children do not often have the opportunity to meet and engage in communication with target language speakers outside the school. Students should also be actively encouraged and supported to seek contact opportunities for themselves since the interview data suggest that many of the learners who live in touristically popular areas do not exploit this situation in order to practice the target language.

The analysis of language related attitudes revealed that students display a great variety of attitudes towards a considerable number of aspects of the target language culture. Their comments were centered around housing, lifestyle, clothing, as well as health and environmental issues, and students could also given an account of their attitudes concerning the nations the language of which they are studying. Students regarded contact situations as beneficial for a number of reasons and reported that cross-

cultural contact helps the development of their language competence (linguistic and socio-linguistic) and contributes to the increase of their motivation and the decrease of their language use anxiety. Participants also noted that inter-ethnic contact influenced their attitudes to target language speakers in a positive way.

In Table 4 we summarize the major themes that emerged in our interviews that are relevant for measuring inter-cultural contact and its effect on language learning in similar foreign language environments. As regards the types of contact situations, we find it important to distinguish personal contact situations based on whether communication takes place between the students and the visitor or the host in the case of trips abroad. This distinction is somewhat similar to proximal and distal contact in the field of social psychology (see e.g. van Dick et al, 2004). Our research also highlights the importance of cultural products as possible mediators of inter-cultural information. In the case of language-related attitudes, we suggest that future research should not only survey national stereotypes such as the English are polite or the Germans are precise, but should include attitude scales related to the life-style of the target language speakers. In addition, before embarking on large-scale questionnaire studies, it is highly recommended to carry out a small scale interview study in which attitudes held by the targeted population are identified. Finally, when measuring the effect of contact on language related attitudes and motivated behavior, it is important to explore how students perceive the importance of inter-cultural contact, since these perceptions often act as important mediators in changing attitudes and in turn affect behavior.

Our study has several limitations, the most important of which is that we only interviewed motivated learners in order to gain rich and elaborate data. It would be interesting to replicate this study with students who have varied motivational characteristics so that more insight could be gained into how contact affects the behavior of less motivated learners. The present research was qualitative in nature therefore generalization is only possible to a limited extent. Nevertheless, we hope that readers of this article who work with students in a similar environment will also experience the important role of inter-ethnic contact in shaping students' attitudes and behavior.

Acknowledgements

We thank Zoltán Dörnyei, Edit Hegybíró Kontra and the three reviewers for their insightful comments. The research reported in this paper was supported by the Research Funds of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (OTKA T047111).

References

Allport, W. G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1977). Attitude-behavior relations: a theoretical analysis and review of empirical research. *Psychological Bulletin, 84*, 888-918.

Amir, Y. (1969). Contact Hypothesis in ethnic relations. *Psychological Bulletin, 71*, 319-342.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1,* 1–47.

Central Statistical Office (2005). *Yearbook of Tourism*. Budapest: Central Statistical Office.

Clément, R. (1980). Ethnicity, contact and communicative competence in a second language. In H. M. Giles, W. P. Robinson, & P. M. Smith (Eds.), *Language: Social psychological perspectives* (pp 147-154). Oxford: Pergamon.

Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1994). Motivation, self-confidence, and group cohesion in the foreign language classroom. *Language Learning, 44*, 417-448.

Clément, R., & Kruidenier, B. G. (1983). Orientation in second language acquisition: I. The effects of ethnicity, milieu, and target language on their emergence. *Language Learning, 33*, 273-291.

Clément, R., Noels, K A., & Deneault, B. (2001). Interethnic contact, identity, and psychological adjustment: The mediating and moderating roles of communication. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*, 559-577.

Cook, S. W. (1978). Interpersonal and attitudinal outcomes in cooperating interracial groups. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 12*, 97-113.

Cook, S. W. (1985) Experiment on social issues. The case of desegregation. *American Psychologist, 40*, 452-460.

Desforges, D. M., Lord, C. G., Pugh, A. M., Sia, L. T., Scarberry, C. N., & Ratcliff, D. C. (1997). Role of representativeness in the generalization part of the Contact Hypothesis. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 19,* 183-204.

Desforges, D. M., Lord, C. G., Ramsey, S. L., Mason, J. A., Van Leenwen, M. D., & West, S. C. (1991). Effects of structured cooperative contact on changing negative attitudes toward stigmatized social groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 531-544.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. London: Longman.

Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (2005). The effects of intercultural contact and tourism on language attitudes and language learning motivation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 24,* 1-31.

Dörnyei, Z., Csizér, K., & Németh, N. (in press). *Motivational dynamics, language attitudes and language globalisation: A Hungarian perspective*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Halász, G., & Lannert, J. (2003). *Jelentés a magyar közoktatásról, 2003* [Report on the Hungarian education]. Budapest: Országos Közoktatási Intézet.

Hamberger, J., & Hewstone, M. (1997). Inter-ethnic contact as a predictor of blatant and subtle prejudice: Test of a model in four West European nations. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 36*, 173-190.

Hewstone, M. (1985). Social psychology and intergroup relations: Cross-cultural perspectives. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *6*, 313-323.

Hewstone, M., Stroebe, W., Codol J-P., & Stephenson, G. M. (1988). *Introduction to social psychology.* Oxford: Basil Blachwell.

Hunyady, Gy. (1996). *Szterotípiák a változó közgondolkodásban* [Stereotypes in a changing world]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Islam, M. R., & Hewstone, M. (1993). Dimensions of contact as predictors of intergroup anxiety, perceived out-group variability, and out-group attitude: An integrative model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 19*, 700-710.

Kormos, J., & Lukóczky, O. (2004). A demotivált nyelvtanuló, azaz a motiváció hiánya az angol nyelvtanulásban [The demotivated language learner and the lack of motivation in learning English as a foreign language]. In. Kontra, E. H., &

Kormos, J. (Eds.), *A nyelvtanuló: Sikerek, kudarcok stratégiák* [The language learner: Successes, failures and strategies] (pp. 109-124). Budapest: Okker Kiadó.
Labrie, N., & Clément, R. (1986). Enthnolingiustic vitality, self-confidence and second language proficiency: An investigation. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 7*, 269-282.
Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research. A philosophic and practical guide*. London: The Falmer Press.
Noels, K., Pon, G., & Clément, R. (1996). Language identity, and adjustment. The role of linguistic self-confidence in the acculturation process. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 15*, 246-264.
Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology, 49*, 65-85.
Pool, I. S. (1966). Effects of cross-national contact on national and international images. In C. Kelman (Ed.), *International behavior. A social-psychological analysis* (pp. 106-129). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
Rosenberg, M. J., & Hovland, C. I. (1960). Cognitive, affective, and behavioral components pf attitudes. In C. I. Hovland & M. J. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Attitude organization and change* (225-275). New Haven: Yale University Press.
Scott, W. A. (1966). Psychological and social correlates of international images. In H. C. Kelman (Ed.), *International behavior. A social-psychological analysis* (pp. 71-103). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
Stangor, C., Jonas, K., Stroebe, W., & Hewstone, M. (1996). Influence of student exchange on national stereotypes, attitudes and perceived group variability. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 26*, 663-675.
Stephan, G. W. (1987). Contact hypothesis in intergroup relations. *Review of Personality and Social Psychology, 9,* 13-40.
Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass, & C. Madden (Eds*.), Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
Van Dick, R., Wagner, U., Pettigrew, T. F., Christ, O., Wolf, C., Petzel, T., Smith Castro, V., & Jackson, J. S. (2004). Role of perceived importance in intergroup contact. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 87,* 211-227.
Widdowson, H.G. (1994) The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly* 28, 377-389.
Widdowson, H.G. (1997) EIL, ESL, EFL: Global issues and local interests. *World Englishes* 16, 135-146.

Table 1 An overview of the participants' characteristics

	Male		**Female**		**Total**
	English	**German**	**German**	**English**	
Budapest	5	3	4	4	16
Western-Hungary*	4	2	5	3	14
Eastern- Hungary**	3	2	3	2	10
Total	*12*	*7*	*12*	*9*	*40*

* Settlements: Abaliget, Bük, Nyúl, Pápa, Pécs, Sárvár, Szentendre

** Settlements: Algyő, Bátonyterenye, Debrecen, Hódmezővásárhely, Mikepércs

Table 2 Overview of the distribution of students in the various contact situations

	Number of students experiencing inter-ethnic contact		
Type of contact	**Learner of English**	**Learner of German**	**Total (max= 40)**
Direct spoken			
In TL country	8	7	15
Abroad other than TL country	7	2	9
In Hungary with NS	10	10	20
In Hungary with NNS	6	4	10
Direct spoken total	19	14	33
Direct written			
Chat	3	2	5
Email	3	0	3
Snail mail	4	1	5
Direct written total	9	3	12
Direct total	19	14	33
Indirect personal			
Abroad	5	2	7
Hungary	8	7	15
Family	3	4	7
Teacher	3	2	5
Indirect personal total	13	11	24
Indirect cultural products			
TV	19	16	35
Internet	14	10	24
Books	11	4	15
Movies	17	9	26
Magazines	11	5	16
Cultural products total	21	19	40

Table 3 Overview of the distribution of students' attitudes

	Positive	Negative
	Number of students	
Attitudes towards the languages		
English	16	6
German	16	6
Attitudes related to the lifestyle of various L2 communities		
Austrians	5	1
Germans	5	0
English	9	2
Americans	2	8
Attitudes related to personal and/or national characteristics of various L2 communities		
Austrians	3	1
Germans	13	6
English	11	6
Americans	4	3

Table 4. The overview of main themes that emerged in the interviews

Types of inter-cultural contact	Direct spoken	In target language country Abroad other than target language country In home country with NS In home country with NNS
	Direct written	Chat Email Snail mail
	Indirect personal	Abroad In home country Family Teacher
	Indirect cultural	TV Internet Books Movies Magazines
Language related attitudes	Attitudes to the language	
	Attitudes concerning life-style	Housing Eating and drinking habits Health Clothing Environmental consciousness Safety
	Attitudes concerning the vitality of the target language countries	
	National attitudes	Stereotypes Perceived differences and similarities
Perceived importance of contact	Effect on communicative competence	Linguistic competence Sociolinguistic competence
	Effect on self-confidence	
	Effect on attitudes	

NOTES

[1] In the Hungarian school system the first eight years of education are called primary education.
[2] The quotes were translated from Hungarian into English by the authors